GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3880
ANSWERED ON:30.04.2007
MERCURY LEVELS IN THE AIR
Barad Shri Jashubhai Dhanabhai

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the recommended levels of mercury in and around the hospitals;

(b) whether the air sample in and around hospitals contained mercury levels which are on an average almost seven times higher than the recommended level;

(c) if so, whether the Government has taken any action to reduce the same;

(d) whether the Union Government has sought the help of US Environment Protection Agency (EPA); and

(e) if so, the details in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) to (c) The National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for pollutants viz. Sulphur dioxide, Oxides of Nitrogen, Suspended Particulate Matter, Respirable Particulate Matter (size less than 10 um) and Lead have been notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for various land uses including sensitive area like hospitals. Presently the NAAQS does not cover mercury.

The CPCB has written to all the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)/Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) of Union Territories (UTs) to ensure, that health care facilities collect spilled mercury and send it back to the manufacturers and take measures so that spilled mercury does not become part of the bio-medical or solid waste generated.

The SPCBs/PCCs have also been asked to incorporate appropriate conditions in the authorization granted under the Bio-Medical (Management & Handling) Rules, 1998 to health care facilities.

Under the Bio- Medical Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1998, incineration of solid waste, including waste contaminated with mercury generated from disposable items is not permitted.

(d) & (e) The Union Government has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Environment Protection Agency (USEPA) in the year 2002 under which bilateral cooperation is going on in various environmental sectors such as Air and Water Quality Management, Management of Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Wastes, Pollution Prevention and Control, Environmental Governance, Environmental Monitoring and Assessment etc. On 2nd April, 2007 the MOU has been extended further, by mutual consent for a further period of five years, by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the USEPA